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AARP New Jersey Applauds Governor Corzine for Needed Assistance

TRENTON, N.J.- AARP New Jersey applauded Governor Jon S. Corzine and his administration today for their leadership and commitment to providing financial assistance for New Jersey residents struggling with property taxes and the skyrocketing costs of natural gas, electricity and heating oil.

AARP responded to the Governor's address on his economic stimulus package before a joint session of the New Jersey State Legislature at noon Thursday.

In his address, Governor Corzine committed to focusing on the most critical needs of New Jersey citizens coping with the current financial crisis, including foreclosure prevention and heating assistance.

"Despite the need to reduce state spending, AARP, with 1.4 million members in the state, is pleased that Governor Corzine is committed to helping our state's neediest citizens weather these tough financial times," said Jim Dieterle, AARP New Jersey State Director. "Energy costs continue to rise at a record breaking pace for New Jerseyans, and it is encouraging to see our state help combat this growing problem."

NJ SHARES is one of the energy assistance programs that will see expansion through the Governor's announcement. NJ SHARES is a nonprofit organization which provides grants to pay the oil, electric, and gas bills of households in need. It will receive a \$10 million appropriation under the Governor's proposal. With this additional funding, many thousands more will be served with as much as \$1,000 to help heat their homes this winter.

The Governor also requested an expansion of the senior property tax freeze programs. The proposed three year plan would increase assistance to nearly 70,000 seniors when implemented.

"If a home owner is choosing between paying for a past due mortgage bill and heating their home, the home owner will choose heat and subsequently risk foreclosure," Dieterle said. "The Governor's announcements on Thursday are steps in the right direction. They provide a framework to help protect our state's residents from having to make tough decisions about which bills to pay and when."

Governor Corzine's actions towards improving property tax and state energy assistance programs are particularly timely given the recent foreclosure crisis affecting all too many New Jerseyans.

AARP looks forward to continued collaboration with the Corzine Administration and New Jersey legislative leaders to quickly enhance and achieve the measures proposed today.

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